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FOR THE SECRETARY; U/S BURNS
USUN FOR JOHN BOLTON
IO FOR A/S KRISTEN SILVERBURG

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IN](#) [UNSC](#) [GOI](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN SECRETARY SARAN URGES USG TO CORRECT
INDIAN MISPERCEPTIONS ON UNSC SEAT

REF: NEW DELHI 8682

Classified By: Charge Robert Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: In his November 15 meeting with Senior Advisor on UN Reform Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran expressed general GOI support for most

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of the USG's UN reform agenda, with some minor disagreement on the oversight mechanisms. He reinforced the GOI's determination to win a permanent seat on the UNSC and affirmed that many in India are now convinced that the US is opposed to New Delhi's campaign. He urged the USG to make a public effort to correct this misperception. Saran also confirmed that the GOI is prepared to accept an end to the G-4, but will not walk out. The Left parties and the opposition are gaining political traction with their claims that the USG wants Indian support for UN reform without backing India's UNSC candidacy. This is limiting the GOI's options, as it does not want to make public moves that would provide more fodder for the critics. The GOI is looking for some public show of support from the USG to demonstrate that it benefits from its support for UN reform. Tahir-Kheli affirmed that while India can make a strong case for its candidacy, the divisiveness of the UNSC expansion issue at present necessitates earlier movement on other priority issues such as management and human rights reform. End Summary.

UN Reform is a Top US Priority

2. (C) In her November 15 meeting with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State on UN Reform Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli affirmed that the UN reform agenda has "moved and not moved" in the past year, and Secretary Rice remains very engaged. Tahir-Kheli emphasized

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that the USG wants to make its case to important countries like India to make it clear that we share a common agenda and that UN reform is not just an American issue. We now have a chance to use all our equities to rebuild the UN from the ground up, as the Secretary pointed out in her address to the General Assembly in September.

3. (C) Tahir-Kheli pointed out that Secretary Rice has stated that UN reform implementation is urgently needed. In her call for a permanent revolution of reform at the UN, she has identified management (encompassing ethics, oversight, mandates and personnel), the creation of a robust Human Rights Council, the Convention Against Terrorism, and the Peace Building Commission. The US supports a Human Rights Council with a higher threshold for membership which would exclude human right violators. Tahir-Kheli said that if countries such as India would speak out in favor of a strong Human Rights Commission, we could make progress on this issue by the end of the year.

The GOI is Supportive - with Caveats

4. (C) Secretary Saran replied that there is no real difference between the US and India on human rights and UN reform issues, adding that the GOI agrees with the USG that a two thirds vote in the Human Rights Commission should be sufficient to prevent the membership of offending states. He pointed out that the GOI wants new entrants into the UNSC to have greater weight than some of the candidates mentioned to date and wondered if the US and India can't look into a "higher bar" for consideration. Saran affirmed that India has supported UN reform for some time, especially when it comes to accountability and transparency in regard to the General Assembly.

5. (C) Saran stated that the GOI concurs with the USG on the Peace Building Commission, is in general agreement regarding the parameters for the Security Council and in full agreement on terrorism issues, and will work hard on these issues. However, he pointed out, the GOI has some doubts about the

proposed oversight body, in that accountability should be the responsibility of the member states, and should not detract from the General Assembly as the final arbiter. Saran asserted that there is no need for another layer of bureaucracy, emphasizing that an independent auditor could issue a report on irregularities that is issued to the public. Ambassador Tahir-Kheli replied that the US proposal is for an oversight body that does not report to the Secretariat, but is independent and thus credible.

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Tahir-Kheli emphasized that reporting to the GA would politicize the issue.

And India's UNSC Candidacy Remains a Sticking Point

16. (C) Saran pointed out that the Indian popular perception is that UN reform does not mean very much unless it addresses the UNSC. The question is how to address this issue, as there is now a deeply-rooted perception in India that the US is opposed to Indian membership on the UNSC; this means that the GOI must maintain a balance to defend its stance with the Indian public. Japan has proposed that there be a new category of "semi-permanent" UNSC membership, but this is totally unacceptable to the GOI. India is happy to work with the US on other issues, where there are no major differences, but the USG will have to "do some thinking" regarding Indian candidacy for the UNSC.

17. (C) Saran emphasized that the USG was projecting the message that it was close to deciding on India's candidacy for the UNSC and had conceded that India plays an important international role, which most in India interpreted to mean that the US was close to supporting the Indian stance. He pointed out that subsequent US opposition on the G-4 issue obscured this, leading many in India to state that the GOI was "led up the garden path" and the US is actually siding with China to oppose India's UNSC seat. Although Saran acknowledged that this was "not reality," positive statements from the Secretary regarding India no longer seem as credible, with many in India believing that the US is "on the warpath to keep us out."

18. (C) Tahir-Kheli replied that both the Secretary and U/S Burns had addressed the growing and important role of India in UN matters and institutions. Further, the USG respects the GOI stance and has expressed support for limited UNSC expansion in order to preserve UNSC effectiveness. The USG has supported carefully crafted language on criteria. UNSC expansion is an issue that the President and the Secretary will decide. The issue of a veto for new UNSC members will be divisive, especially between the G-4 and the African Union.

India to Stick with the G-4

19. Saran noted that while the US claims to hold a different position from China, the Indian people have come to feel that both countries have come out against the G-4. Saran conceded that the G-4 may have run out of steam, but confirmed that the GOI is still pursuing it. He confirmed that India will not "walk out" of the G-4, as the process brings the Indian UNSC candidacy to a higher level, noting that the G-4 has been successful in mobilizing wide support, although the Africans have been a problem. If the G-4 disbands, India will accept it, as the GOI has always been aware that it will have to "go it alone" and the G-4 just provides a framework within which to pursue the UNSC candidacy. To put things back into a positive light, the GOI needs clearer USG support. Saran noted that the GOI view is that the G-4 is not the problem, but the internal dynamics of Africa, where there is a lack of unity and the African states cannot get together to present a common position. He claimed that the campaign against the G-4 has been "massive," but has not really bothered India, as some countries will always oppose such efforts. Saying that the G-4 may not continue and may come to an end, Saran confirmed that India will not take the first step, as it has made too large an investment in the group and owes something to its G-4 supporters.

110. (C) Tahir-Kheli indicated that the G-4 proposal was divisive within the UN and cost us the entire month of July, when nothing productive was accomplished. The problem is that not every member of the G-4 carries the same weight and the group has been ineffective. She predicted that if the G-4 proceeds, it will result in the loss of more valuable time.

Management Reform Critical

111. (C) Tahir-Kheli noted that it would be helpful for the overall UN reform effort if the US could have India's public support for management reform. She told Saran the US hopes

for progress by December on the Convention on Terrorism, the Human Rights Commission, and the Peace Building Commission. She underlined that it would be important for the US to have this progress in hand by the time US budget discussions begin in January, as this would discourage attempts to limit the US assessed contribution. She explained that public support from influential countries such as India would be particularly important. Saran took the point and promised to be in touch with India's Permanent Representative to ask him to make a supportive statement. Tahir-Kheli said such a move would be valuable, since India's Permanent Representative has made some unhelpful statements in the past, suggesting that the UN is working fine and does not need reform (Tahir-Kheli did not have USUN cable reporting Ambassador Sen's remarks on the UNSC at the time of her meeting with the Foreign Secretary.)

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Comment - Supportive but Adamant on UNSC Membership

12. (C) Saran, ever the effective diplomat, clearly stated that while the GOI supports UN reform in principle, and is willing to say so publicly and it is intent on gaining UNSC membership and will not relent or be sidetracked. The GOI wants UN reform, but within its own parameters, meaning that it cannot offend or distance India from its supporters in other developing countries, and must not appear to be a process dominated by US concerns. The GOI, for example, does not want to appear to be abandoning the G-4 process at USG behest, even though it is ready to concede that the G-4 may have already outlived its usefulness. Indian foreign policy has come to play a dominant role in domestic politics, with the Left and opposition parties quick to characterize the UPA government as too compliant to US wishes. The UPA must therefore step carefully, lest it provide further ammunition to its opponents.

13. (U) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli has cleared this message.
BLAKE